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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ISTANBUL 000693

SIPDIS

PLEASE PASS TO THE FOLLOWING: USAID/DCHA/AA FOR GARVELINK,  
USAID/OFDA FOR GOTTLIEB AND USAID/PPC/DCO FOR  
MENGHETTI/NICHOLSON AND USUN FOR MALY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AORC](#) [IR](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE SHOWS TURKEY,S GROWING  
HUMANITARIAN ROLE

11. (U) Summary: The Governments of Turkey and the United States co-chaired a high-level conference in Istanbul April 27-28, 2006 on international cooperation for disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. The conference, attended by twelve nations and the leadership of the United Nations Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), considered lessons learned from past disasters with a view to improving international cooperation and coordination in the future. There was broad consensus that the UN,s OCHA should provide the framework for this cooperation, and that the elements should be put in place before countries are called on to respond to disasters. By co-chairing and hosting the gathering, the Government of Turkey (GOT) clearly signaled the importance it attaches to the issue and its desire to play a leading role in the region. End Summary.

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Bilateral Pre-Meeting  
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12. (U) The U.S. and Turkish co-chairs met bilaterally on April 26 to set the stage for the conference. Hasan Ipek, General Director of the Turkish Emergency Management Agency (TEMA), described how Turkey carried out humanitarian relief; Musa Kulaklikaya, Vice President of the Turkish International Cooperation Administration (TIKA), explained the increase in international development assistance from Turkey over the ten years. TEMA described its organization as &a little baby, just born, and now starting to walk,8 and looked to USAID,s OFDA with admiration for being &a very old agency.8 TIKA outlined its growing presence in international development since its founding in 1992, with recent expansion in the Middle East over the last two years.

13. (U) William Garvelink, USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance and Greg Gotlieb, Acting Director of the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), in turn laid out the US approach to disaster response. Significantly, when USAID commented that TIKA is &very active in your area,8 the Vice President of TIKA (corresponding to the Deputy Administrator of USAID) responded ~ just in this area,8 underlining that Turkey sees itself as increasingly playing a role on the international stage. Overall, the bilateral sounded a collaborative tone that resonated throughout the entire conference.

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Conference Objectives  
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14. (U) Garvelink, who chaired the sessions, explained that the objective of the conference was to exchange information and discuss concrete ways nations could learn from one another in the area of disaster relief. He went on to express support for the OCHA Donor Support Group (ODSG), the informal governing body for OCHA that currently has 19 members, with the aim of getting more nations to join. Through more nations joining the ODSG and coordinating their assistance through OCHA, he explained humanitarian assistance would be more efficient and effective. By the end of two-days of meetings, all participants had expressed support for the OCHA framework and five countries -- India, Republic of Korea, People,s Republic of China, Russia, and Turkey -- had indicated a possible interest in becoming members of the ODSG.

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Lessons from the Field  
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15. (U) The Government of Pakistan (GOP) related its experience in dealing with the 2005 earthquake, which killed 73,000 people and affected half a million families. Major General Farooq Ahmed Khan, Head of the Pakistan Federal Relief Commission, outlined the assistance Pakistan received from 88 nations and 200 NGOs, including significant aid from Turkey. This experience showed how the UN,s cluster approach, whereby resources are concentrated according to function, can be an effective mechanism for disaster relief.

However, Farooq cautioned that agencies in the lead within these clusters may not have leadership ability, and may have a vested interest in distributing funds. To deal with these concerns, it is important to have a one roof, one window, operation that consolidates information and decision-making.

16. (U) Farooq and others emphasized that it is especially crucial to have an agency and plan in place before a disaster strikes. By having such a plan in place, Turkey was able to immediately mobilize relief for Pakistan even before receiving an official request for assistance. The U.S. then related its experience with Hurricane Katrina, and the lessons it had learned.

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Working through the OCHA Framework  
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17. (U) Yvette Stevens, Assistant United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, set out the three UN guiding principles for humanitarian assistance: strengthened coordination; strengthened response capacity; and predictable funding. Stevens also described OCHA's current challenges and weaknesses, and participants used these three guiding principles to discuss how to improve upon these weaknesses. All delegates agreed that OCHA provides the proper framework for coordinating disaster relief.

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Looking Forward and Comment  
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18. (U) The UN representatives defined their coming objectives. One area of future work is OCHA's funding. Currently, OCHA depends for 90% of its budget on donor contributions, which renders impossible a long-term strategy for disaster preparedness. The UN also stated it needs to do more working with countries that we do not traditionally do business with and invite them to work within the OCHA framework. This is especially true of many Middle Eastern countries, which to date have not played as active a role in disaster relief (UAE and Jordan being exceptions).

19. (SBU) Comment: The conference spurred action for pressing countries to translate verbal support into actual OCHA Donor Support Group membership. Given the leading role that the UN is playing, and will increasingly play, in coordinating disaster relief and donor assistance, it is also important to insure that OCHA has the necessary resources to successfully carry out this function. Getting new participants to join the OCHA framework could help improve OCHA's economic viability and lead to better coordination among donor countries in the field. USAID is drafting a Joint Chairs Summary of the meeting that will include several concrete steps for follow-up action. The summary will be sent to Washington once it has been approved by the Turkish delegation. OCHA will undertake a stock-taking, exercise on behalf of the ODSG after six months to determine progress towards implementing the recommendations. End Comment.  
JONES